Between Reality and Fantasy

al-Balagh, 19 April 1945

President Roosevelt's death was a sudden shock, one that shook the whole world violently, and paralysed it, for a time, from all discussion of world politics; it may well have distracted a great many people, too, for a time, from following the news of the war itself — though it never once distracted the fighting soldiers from carrying out their own hateful duty to its furthest extent.

The truth is that the democratic world owes President Roosevelt the very greatest of debts, and that this democratic world had pinned upon its late President hopes no less significant than the great achievements he had already given it.

Democracy owes President Roosevelt her own magnificent steadfastness before the German onslaught's own violence, then her halting of that onslaught, then her shattering of the German defence, and now her arrival at the very heart of Germany, and her own readiness to storm Berlin itself.

Those who recall Monsieur Paul Reynaud's own desperate appeal to President Roosevelt — and France's own collapse, shortly after that appeal — can properly gauge just how much democracy owes this great departed man.

He found himself, at that moment, in no position to give France the very word that might have steadied and strengthened her own resistance — but he knew how to turn that catastrophe to democracy's own advantage instead. He prepared the American nation to assist the British, at the very moment they stood alone, awaiting the crushing German assault; he then drove the American nation to actually deliver that assistance; and he laboured, gently yet firmly and productively, until he had persuaded the American nation to abandon her own isolation, and take part in the defence of right and justice. By the time American hesitation had finally been overcome, he had already won the first stage of the war. And there he was, casting America's own tremendous power onto the scales — yet never once saying, as Rome's ancient enemy once said, and as Kaiser Wilhelm himself said in the last war, "woe to the vanquished" — saying, instead, the word of peace and security, for the whole of humanity.

It is certain that the Americans' own entry into this war, led by Roosevelt, made it possible for the British to hold firm, and to move from defence into offence, and made it possible for the Russians to resist, and to crush the Germans utterly. The victory the Allies are now securing is, then, a direct result of this remarkable man's own personal efforts — efforts that undoubtedly took their own toll on his personal capacity for patience, exertion, and endurance, and that led, in the end, to his own death, a martyr among the martyrs of earnest labour in duty's cause. If the Americans count him among the war's own victims, they are not mistaken; indeed, every warring nation, and every nation that will benefit from democracy's own victory, ought to count him among their own martyrs too. Roosevelt was never merely an American — he was a human being whose own humanity had risen to the point where he became, in effect, a citizen of every country that loves freedom, and aspires to security from fear, hunger, and misery.

The democratic world expected of this great man, in the days ahead, nothing less than what he had already given it through years of hardship and difficulty; President Roosevelt was as essential and significant a force for organizing the peace as he had been for winning the war. But God tests people however He wills, for a wisdom known to Him alone, and not to people — and He has deprived people of Roosevelt's own efforts, at the very moment they needed those efforts most.

There is no doubt the United States will continue the war along President Roosevelt's own course, until it reaches its intended end: Germany's unconditional surrender.

But the graver question is this: will the United States pursue, in organizing the peace, the very same path President Roosevelt himself wanted, without deviating from it, little or much? It is well known that the personality of the President of the Republic carries tremendous weight in American policy; it is equally well known that the new President represents the moderate wing of the Democratic Party that won its fourth successive election. But it would be getting ahead of events to predict anything now about the new President's own stance toward the problems of peace — and how many such problems there are! And how thoroughly complex they prove to be!

The new President's own term has begun with an apparent solution to one of these problems: Russia had been showing no small measure of coolness toward the San Francisco Conference, and one result of this

coolness was that Monsieur Molotov found himself beset by business that stood between him and travelling to this conference. People began asking themselves what this business might actually be, seeking its cause now in the West, now in the East, now in the difficulties of the war, now in the difficulties of the peace.

But Monsieur Molotov managed to overcome this business, smooth away these difficulties, and decide to travel to San Francisco after all, to take part in the conference alongside his fellow foreign ministers of the great powers. Indeed, he managed even more than that: he decided to travel in time to join the great powers' own foreign ministers at their preliminary meeting — a meeting they call preparatory, but which we ourselves call foundational, since it will settle matters that, once agreed upon there, will admit of neither retreat nor deviation, once the representatives of some forty-odd states, of both the old world and the new, actually convene.

Nothing proves this more clearly than the fact that the British Prime Minister had wished to address the House of Commons today on matters of war and policy, only to announce, on Tuesday, that he preferred to postpone this address. He clearly preferred this postponement out of reluctance to get ahead of the negotiations soon to take place in Washington among the foreign ministers of the three powers, over decisions taken at the Crimea Conference that have not yet borne fruit. Among these decisions is one concerning Poland, where no united government has yet been formed, which has not yet been invited to the conference, and for whom it remains unclear how she is even to be invited, or how she is to be represented there. Will the Lublin government be invited, as Russia wishes, or the London government? Or will neither be invited at all? Or will the three powers instead choose someone to represent her at the conference — much as the states of the Arab League will themselves choose someone to represent Palestine on the League's own council, until Palestine is able to exercise her own legal independence in genuine practice?

There are, without doubt, other problems no less complex than the Polish problem, which will become the subject of negotiation among the three powers' own representatives. This means the Crimea Conference itself now requires a sequel in Washington, before its own decisions can even be properly received by that great conference soon to convene in San Francisco.

We do not know whether the three powers' own representatives in Washington will resume discussion of Security Council voting, or leave it aside; nor do we know whether they will resume discussion of middle and small nations' representation on the Security Council, or leave that aside too. But we do know the British Parliament occupied itself with both these questions this past week. In the House of Lords, the government's own representative, Lord Cranborne, said certain things we cannot be entirely sure we understood correctly at all! It would appear Egyptians, and Egyptian writers especially, need a certain improved facility in understanding the language of English statesmen, as the Egyptian Gazette puts it — since they failed, apparently, to understand last week's Times article the way it ought to have been understood.

We do not know for certain whether we understood Lord Cranborne's own remarks in the House of Lords correctly, but what struck us from them is his view that small states will have a fundamental role in the peace system to be proposed, or decided upon, at San Francisco — since they will help prevent war and punish aggression, and since this will impose upon them obligations they must fulfil, if they wish to prevent war, punish aggression, and protect themselves against being attacked in turn. Should these small states refuse to take part in the workings of the body that will oversee the safeguarding of peace, they will expose themselves to a grave danger: never being consulted on any matter whatsoever.

This means — if we have understood the British minister's own remarks correctly — that small states face a choice between two things: either accept membership in the body that will safeguard peace, accept whatever obligations follow from that membership, and fulfil those obligations properly, or else be neglected, consulted on nothing at all, sometimes not even on matters concerning themselves. This is only natural, of course: those who accept membership in any body must bear whatever burdens that membership imposes upon them.

We now know the small states' own obligations, should they take part in this body — but we still do not know the full extent of their rights. It will be their right to be consulted on safeguarding the peace; it will be their right to be protected against aggression — and that is a great deal, it would seem. But will it also be their right to have a genuine say in safeguarding the peace, equal to the great powers' own say? This is the very difficulty no one has yet managed to resolve.

The matter has advanced one small step further: Lord Cranborne declared that, among the small states, there are some of real significance, by virtue of their own geographic position or their own productive capacity, and that this demands they be well represented on the Security Council — a matter now under active consideration. What is clear is that the great powers will bear the lion's share of the burden of safeguarding peace, and that their own word must therefore be first and last.

As for the House of Commons, we saw members there who dislike the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, since they neither guarantee nor safeguard the peace — either because they make the great powers' own word first and last, granting these powers an unreasonable authority, or because they will create a body preoccupied with debate rather than with actually safeguarding peace. The Minister of State replied to these members that they were chasing a mere fantasy.

Likewise, one British minister declared, in the House of Lords, that small states — if they truly want security and dignity — must take part in the body soon to be established at San Francisco, and accept whatever obligations are imposed upon them. And a minister in the British House of Commons, Mr. Law, declared that those demanding small states be reasonably represented on the Security Council, in a manner guaranteeing them some measure of equality, were chasing a mere fantasy.

We have no wish to interpret either minister's own remarks further — they are clear enough to need no interpretation. There is, however, another piece of news, not of the same significance as these two British ministers' own remarks, but not without a meaning that requires some reflection and thought. This news reaches us from America, and we hope we have understood it correctly, better than we understood the Times article. Mr. Sumner Welles delivered a speech declaring that the natural solution to the Palestine question lies in placing it under international trusteeship, with no other path to a solution available. As for the disagreement between Arabs and Jews, it is to be resolved through direct negotiations, conducted under this trusteeship's own shelter.

Palestine had already been under the League of Nations' own international trusteeship, with Great Britain acting on the League's own behalf in administering it — and it was precisely under this international trusteeship, under this British Mandate, that the Palestine problem

reached the degree of complexity it has now reached. This new proposal changes nothing at all: under it, Palestine would remain under international trusteeship, exactly as before. All that would actually change is that Great Britain would no longer monopolize the Mandate alone — this same Mandate would instead become shared among an international committee, which would bear the burdens of administration, and under whose shelter negotiations would proceed to resolve the disagreement between Arabs and Jews.

We do not know what Palestine would actually gain from retaining this international trusteeship, and simply spreading the Mandate among several powers, after it had been the monopoly of a single power, Great Britain. Nor do we know whether the European and American world has understood, or still fails to understand, that the question of Palestine — like the other questions of the Arab East — cannot possibly be solved through trusteeship, nor through Mandate, but only through one single thing, with no substitute: independence.

We repeat today what we have said more than once before: the old dispute between East and West has already gone on far too long, and produced far too many bad effects, and the time has come for it to vanish, replaced by a cooperation grounded in accord, goodwill, and mutual respect. There is no path to this except for the West to erase from itself, entirely and completely, the very idea of trusteeship, Mandate, and intervention of any form whatsoever, where this Arab East is concerned.

The Egyptian Gazette may well think we have failed to understand either British minister's own remarks, or Mr. Sumner Welles's own remarks — but what we can affirm with confidence is that Egyptians and Easterners understand us perfectly well, and believe, correctly, that we are depicting European opinion to them with real precision, and depicting their own opinion back to Europeans with equal precision.